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COMMISSION**

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Memorandum

TO: Advisory Council

DATE: May 7, 2008

FR: Valerie Knepper

W.I.: 1611

RE: TransLink® for Transit Oriented Development: Pilot Project

MTC has a number of policies, funding programs and technical studies to foster livability in our communities, improve the quality of our development patterns and enhance alternatives to auto travel, generally referred to as “smart growth” and transit oriented development (TOD). MTC is also developing cards to conveniently pay for transit rides in the Bay Area, called TransLink®, that provide a cashless way to pay for trips on transit. The TransLink® card stores value in the form of electronic cash (e-cash) and transit passes. Now that the TransLink® cards are operational on a few key transit systems, MTC is developing a “soft roll out” of this program for the public.

MTC staff, working cooperatively with AC Transit staff, have developed a new pilot project that will provide transit passes for residents of select transit oriented developments (TOD), and to subsequently evaluate the impacts of the program. This project will provide residents of select transit oriented developments in Berkeley, Oakland, Richmond, and Emeryville with free unlimited local and transbay travel on AC Transit’s system for one year using TransLink® cards. These “TransLink® for TOD” customers will provide valuable feedback about the TransLink® program, as well as provide travel pattern and usage data to support MTC’s ongoing TOD initiatives. This pilot will also serve as TransLink®’s initial “institutional” pass program, with the institutions being specific TODs.

Description of the Pilot TransLink® for TOD Project

- Distribution of up to 1,900 TransLink® cards loaded with unlimited travel on AC Transit for one year to residents of a maximum of 1,500 TOD housing units. Project will include customized transit information maps and other supportive materials.
- TODs are selected based on the following characteristics: must be very close to high quality AC Transit service, high density with low parking ratios, building site manager willing and able to publicize and support implementation of the project. The overall program will include TODs in multiple cities, a mixture of rental and ownership residence, a combination of already occupied and currently leasing/selling, and a variety of housing types and population types. It will include a high proportion of affordable units.
- Regional Measure 2 (RM-2) TransLink® Marketing funds are being used to support the cost of the transit pass costs through a funding agreement with AC Transit. These funds will be used to pay AC Transit their “eco-pass” rate of \$100 per person for full transit service (including both Transbay and local service). RM-2 TransLink® Marketing funds

will also be used to support marketing, outreach, and program evaluation in MTC's marketing contract, under separate contracts to be managed by MTC.

- The project includes an evaluation component that will entail pre-surveys of transit usage, on-going monitoring of transit usage, and post surveys of transit use and the TransLink® program.

Benefits of the TransLink® for TOD Pilot Project

- For the TransLink® program managers, this project helps test the demand for TransLink® transit passes and impact on transit ridership of introductory free transit passes for residents in a variety of TODs. It also creates a network of TransLink® customers to provide ongoing customer feedback. Proof-of-concept model will provide data to help determine the viability of future arrangements with cities and developers to share the cost of subsidized transit passes for TOD residents and employees.
- For MTC as a whole, this project serves the goals of regional FOCUS project and Regional Transportation Plan and creates synergy between and among multiple MTC initiatives—increasing transit use, support for TOD, equity/environmental justice, smart parking and TransLink®. It implements recommendations from MTC's Smart Parking Study by encouraging cities to reconsider parking minimums and supporting transit passes for TOD residents.
- For the TOD residents this project provides additional transportation mobility and financial benefits, particularly of significant importance to low-income households with children.
- For developers / site managers this project provides a way to assist their current residents, to support and enhance the “green” ecological orientation of their building/development, and to generate additional publicity for their developments.
- For AC Transit this project provides a test of a residential universal pass program, as well as an opportunity to create greater awareness of under-recognized quality services, to build ridership on underutilized buses, and to build longer-term bus ridership based in locations with high quality transit services.

Status/Next Steps

We would appreciate your comments and assistance in implementing this project (please note that we need to work quickly due to the timing requirements of the funding sources.) We currently are in the process of signing up approximately 1300 housing units; we have preliminary participation :

- Berkeley – about 540 units, all affordable, seniors and mixed ages, mostly rental, all already occupied, primarily along University Avenue and San Pablo Avenue.
- Oakland – about 450 units, both rental and for-sale, mixture of occupied and of being leased/sold, mixed affordable and market rate, several locations.
- Emeryville – about 60 units, all affordable, all senior, on San Pablo Ave.
- Richmond – about 230 units, mixed income, owner occupied.

At the time of writing this memo we still have additional capacity in the project for about 200 units. We are particularly looking for market rate units that are already occupied, to balance the current participants, and welcome your suggestions and contacts.

We are planning a press release for this project to publicize the effort – tentatively scheduled for June 10th in Berkeley. We are also in the process of developing the survey instrument and the customized transit maps.

I appreciate your comments and suggestions.